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FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7744

INFO RUEHZN/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION WASHINGTON DC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000533

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR A/S KRAMER AND DRL, AND DAS BRYZA AND  
EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL KDEM KJUS AM

SUBJECT: SECOND OPPOSITION YOUTH ACTIVIST ATTACKED IN  
ARMENIA

REF: A. YEREVAN 438

¶B. YEREVAN 425

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SUMMARY  
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¶11. (SBU) On June 25, two unknown men assaulted 20-year-old Armenian citizen Narek Hovakimian, an active member of the pro-opposition HIMA (Now) youth movement that emerged in response to Armenia's disputed February presidential election. Hovakimian, who was hospitalized with head and stomach injuries resulting from the attack, told the press that he is convinced that the attack was politically motivated. This is the second attack on a HIMA activist in less than a month, following the May 28 attack on HIMA leader Arsen Kharatian (ref A). Its also the third attack in little over a month on opposition activists who continue to dispute the election result and the authorities' violent post-election crackdown (ref B). END  
SUMMARY.

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ACTIVIST CHASED DOWN AND ATTACKED  
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¶12. (SBU) Arsen Torosian, a friend of Hovakimian's and HIMA's current leader, told Emboff that the assault took place around 3 in the afternoon as Hovakimian was leaving Yerevan State University, where he had just finished taking a final exam. A young man unknown to Hovakimian, whom he had seen earlier in a university hallway, approached and tried to call Hovakimian outside for a conversation over a girl unknown to Hovakimian. At this point, the man immediately took hold of Hovakimian's wrist and tried to pull him in the direction to a nearby, remote garden. Hovakimian noted the fact that the man had called him by his full name, which also added to his suspicions about this approach.

¶13. (SBU) Hovakimian, who did not recognize the name of the girl in question, and recalling fellow HIMA activist's Arsen Kharatian's recent beating (ref A), tried to escape. He reached an underpass located near the university and tried to hide in the store of a friend, but unfortunately his friend was not there and the man and a second unknown assailant caught up with him, where they began to

attack him. The attack lasted about 20-25 seconds and Hovakimian received about 10-15 blows to his head and stomach, after which the attackers ran away. Hovakimian told reporters afterwards that assailants had not uttered a single word as they beat him, which struck him as out of the ordinary if they really were pursuing a case involving a girl.

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ANOTHER "UNSOLVABLE" CASE?  
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¶14. (SBU) Workers from some nearby stores assisted Hovakimian and called an ambulance. According to doctors who treated him, Hovakimian's injuries were not life-threatening. Torosian told Emboff that when police arrived at the hospital to talk to Hovakimian, one of their friends heard a police major saying that this is one of "those unsolvable cases." Torosian thinks that the police will either refuse to launch a criminal case into the attack after the preliminary investigation, due to lack of evidence, or will launch one only to drop it later.

¶15. (SBU) According to the opposition media, Hovakimian probably attracted attention after taking active part in the HIMA Congress that was held in Yerevan on June 18. The Congress was scheduled to take place in one of Yerevan's public schools, but then the school refused to host it. Therefore, the Congress participants marched from the school to Northern Avenue -- across from Freedom Square -- where they held an open air meeting. That evening Hovakimian made two speeches

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with a megaphone, one near the school, and a second on Northern Avenue. Torosian told Emboff that Hovakimian is an "active" member of HIMA.

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COMMENT  
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¶16. (SBU) Although the cause of this attack may likely never be known, its target suggests it was politically motivated. Neither this attack, nor the two that preceded it, has been condemned by any public official. That the authorities have neither condemned nor actively investigated the attacks is cause for concern that the authorities are either sanctioning or orchestrating such incidents. END COMMENT.

PENNINGTON